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Given the inadequate funding that our military has received over the last 6 years, I believe this would be a grave mistake. I note that just this week the incoming chiefs of the Army and Marine Corps are quoted in the press as expressing concern about the long-term implications of the mission. I quote Army General Shinseki:

Each additional contingency operation impacts the Army's ability to remain focused on its war-fighting requirements. I am concerned about the prospects of a long-term commitment to Kosovo with ground forces.

I just want to put it down to home. Earlier this year I visited my naval air station in Jacksonville. I was shocked at what I saw. Of 21 P-3 aircraft on the tarmac, only four could fly. My S-3 pilots were only getting 5 hours a month flying time because there were not enough planes.

This House just passed the supplemental appropriations bill to reimburse the services for the President's air campaign and provide for other urgent service requirements. It was not enough, but it was a start. Now that we have met these urgent needs, we must prevent readiness from declining again.

The gentleman from Missouri's amendment would allow that to happen, and I urge my colleagues to oppose it.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN).

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding this time to me.

Mr. Chairman, we have a peace plan for Kosovo. Milosevic's troops are moving out, peacekeepers are moving in, the refugees are going home. America can claim a victory by the outstanding young men and women in our armed services. Yet this House could snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

We must support the agreement, provide the funds, back the peacekeepers. Instead, in this bill, the Republican majority has chosen to cut the funds, to pull back the peacekeepers.

This bill prohibits funding after September 30 for any U.S. military involvement in Kosovo, even to help secure the peace. Not only that, two other Republicans, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. SOUDER) and the gentleman from Florida (Mrs. FOWLER) have amendments that would undermine the peace plan by banning peacekeepers. We should defeat these and approve the Skelton amendment to strike the provisions in the underlying bill.

Mr. Chairman, faced with tough choices, the President concluded that the risks of action were outweighed by the risks of inaction. Turns out he was right and the naysayers were wrong.

The naysayers said to ignore this ethnic cleansing, it is not our problem. The President said Milosevic's brutality must not stand. The naysayers said, never mind. The President said, never again. The naysayers warned of American battle deaths, but not one American has been lost in combat.

The naysayers said the conflict would spread, but it has been contained. The naysayers said it would sever relations with Russia, but Russia is our partner in the peace plan. Criticism is easy, but leadership takes courage.

This House has not shown courage on Kosovo. It has acted irresponsibly, voting against withdrawing troops, voting against the air campaign, yet doubling funds for the campaign. If we vote today to cut off funding and renege on our commitment to NATO, Russia and the world, we bring further shame to this House.

Mr. Chairman, we are better than that. Our country deserves more than that. Bring peace in the Balkans, preserve America's role as a world leader, reject these ill-advised efforts to undermine a peace in Kosovo.

Reject the Souder and Fowler amendments. Vote for the Skelton amendment.

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER).

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Let me respond to the last speaker that talked about the House acting irresponsibly. Irresponsible action by this House would be to not properly fund the Nation's national military strategy to fight and win two nearly simultaneous major regional conflicts. That is exactly what would be irresponsible.

To come onto this floor and then to try to claim that if we are not funding some peacekeeping operation that does not even test the gut-wrenching test of vital national security interest, that we can somehow then go to sleep with our responsibilities in other areas of the world, baffles my mind.

I mean, let me share with my colleagues what I mean by the gut-wrenching test. Does the United States have vital interests? None that could be debated. Why? Because we see the President and the American people were unwilling to put troops on the ground. That is the gut-wrenching test.

America understands the test for "vital" is if, in fact, we would sacrifice or send our own son or daughter into combat. But if people in America are unwilling to do that, then there is a strong sense in their gut that it must not be vital to our particular interest.

Now, we are in NATO. Because of our interest in NATO, the United States is a leader in NATO, we are in it. That is what is very, very clear.

Now I am going to be a constructive critic, and that is what I have tried to do in this process. But there is a clear difference in foreign policy between Republicans and Democrats, and that is very clear in the enjoinment of this debate.

Presently, there is a foreign policy of engagement where we have 265,000 troops in 135 countries all around the world; we have reduced the force in

half, we have placed great stresses on the force, increased the operational tempo. We cannot retain the force, and we cannot even recruit to meet the goals of the force structure to meet our national military strategy.

Now let me shift gears. This allegation boggles my mind: Somehow achieved a victory? Why are we so anxious to say a victory has been achieved? Do my colleagues realize that Milosevic was able to achieve his objectives on the ground and that because refugees have now been sent to all areas of the world, try to get these refugees back into Kosovo at a time when are they going to feel the security to even go back?

Now let me pose another question. Peacekeepers? Do my colleagues know what protects a peacekeeper? It is neutrality. I feel much more comfortable having an international force on the ground, not NATO. NATO, that is not neutral. We have been bombing for 2 months, 3 weeks. We are seen as the enemy by the Serbs. That makes us a target. In their eyes it makes us the occupiers, and if there is anything we ever learn about the Balkans in the thousands of pages I have read it is that a bad situation always gets worse in the Balkans when there is an outside intervening source, especially one that is seen as the enemy.

So, yes, there is some apprehension.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BUYER. I yield to the gentleman from Maryland.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Chairman, does the gentleman believe that the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina is worse today than it was 3 years ago?

Mr. BUYER. In Bosnia-Herzegovina it is better today than it was 3 years ago.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Chairman, I remind the gentleman Bosnia-Herzegovina is in the Balkans.

Mr. BUYER. I understand that, I understand that. I am just saying that what I most fear about is, in Kosovo shots can be taken and that has not happened in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The gentleman's point is well taken.

Let me also compliment the gentleman who is the chairman of the Subcommittee on Military Procurement, and I think the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) understands this. What we are trying to achieve here is for the President, if he wants to use moneys for the peacekeeping operation, then come with the supplemental appropriation, do not take it out of hide. A lot of the things for which we are doing here is to fund the national military strategy; that is our goal, and I also would want to work with the gentleman.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT).

(Mr. SPRATT asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)